

First record of Brown Nightjar *Veles binotatus* for Sierra Leone

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Première mention de l'Engoulevent à deux taches *Veles binotatus* pour la Sierra Leone. Un Engoulevent à deux taches *Veles binotatus* a été entendu et brièvement vu dans la Réserve forestière de Gola Nord, au sud-est de la Sierra Leone, le 9–11 février 2006. Le chant a été enregistré et ressemble à ceux de l'espèce connus d'ailleurs en Afrique de l'Ouest. Ceci constitue la première mention de cet engoulevent pour le pays.

Brown Nightjar *Veles binotatus* is a poorly known forest species of West and Central Africa. It is patchily distributed in the Lower Guinea forests of west and southern Cameroon, Gabon, Central African Republic and Congo-Brazzaville, and is even less well known from the Upper Guinea forests, with records in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia (Borrow & Demey 2001, 2004). The westernmost records include one from Mt. Nimba (Colston & Curry-Lindahl 1986) and another 135 km south of Nimba, at $c.06^{\circ}16'N$ $08^{\circ}40'W$ (Louette 1990). The voice was only described with certainty in 1998 (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998). We report here a record from Gola Forest, south-east Sierra Leone, which is the first for the country (Dowsett 1993) and extends the known range $c.250$ km west.

Gola Forest is the largest remaining tract of Upper Guinea forest in Sierra Leone. Covering an area of $c.750$ km², the forest is contiguous with a larger area across the border in Liberia. An avifaunal survey undertaken in the late 1980s produced a list of 274 species (Allport *et al.* 1989), which included the majority of the Upper Guinea forest endemics (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998) and a large proportion of the Guinea-Congo forest species known from Upper Guinea. Some species have since been added to the list (pers. obs.) but, until now, none was new for the country.

Description

On 9 February 2006 around 20.00 hrs, AS heard an unfamiliar vocalisation near a temporary camp ($07^{\circ}39'N$ $10^{\circ}56'W$), in a small clearing of $c.200$ m² created by former logging activity, adjacent to a small stream 1–2 m wide, within Gola North Forest Reserve. The forest was intact but with a broken canopy. On consulting the Chappuis



Figure 1. Sonogram of a single note from a Brown Nightjar *Veles binotatus* song, Gola Forest Reserve, Sierra Leone, February 2006. The structure of the note is clear and is very similar to that described for the species by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998) from Cameroon, Congo and Côte d'Ivoire.

Sonogramme d'une note du chant de l'Engoulevent à deux taches *Veles binotatus*, Réserve forestière de Gola, Sierra Leone, février 2006. La structure de la note est claire et très semblable à celle décrite pour l'espèce par Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998) du Cameroun, du Congo et de la Côte d'Ivoire.

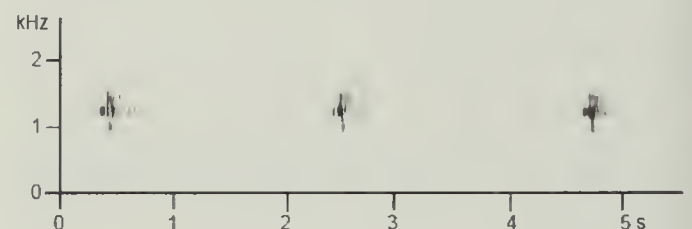


Figure 2. Sonogram of the song of a distant Brown Nightjar *Veles binotatus*, Gola North Forest Reserve, Sierra Leone, February 2006. The structure of the notes is slightly compressed but the timing is evident, at just over one per two seconds, and thus similar to the timing shown in Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998) for a bird in Côte d'Ivoire recorded by M. Gartshore.

Sonogramme du chant de l'Engoulevent à deux taches *Veles binotatus*, Réserve forestière de Gola Nord, Sierra Leone, février 2006. Bien que la structure des notes soit un peu comprimée, il est clair que les notes sont émises à raison d'environ une note toutes les deux secondes, ce qui est semblable à la vitesse d'un chant de Côte d'Ivoire enregistré par M. Gartshore (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1998).

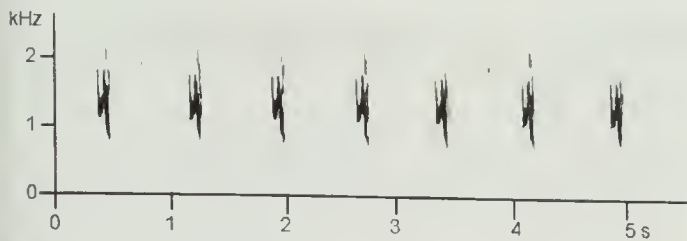


Figure 3. Sonogram of Brown Nightjar *Veles binotatus* song from Ghana (Chappuis 2000). The notes are delivered at a rate of just under one per second, about twice the speed of the bird recorded in Gola Forest.

Sonogramme du chant d'un Engoulevent à deux taches *Veles binotatus* enregistré au Ghana (Chappuis 2000). Les notes sont émises à raison d'un peu plus d'une note par seconde, soit environ deux fois plus rapidement que les notes du chant enregistré dans la Réserve forestière de Gola.

(2000) recordings, AS readily identified the song as belonging to Brown Nightjar. EK then realised that he had heard the same song near another camp, c.35 km to the south-west (07°23'N 11°11'W), in Gola East, on 21 January 2006. Playback failed to elicit any response and no further song was heard that day. Next day the bird sang again c.1 hour before dawn and a brief recording was obtained. Again, the bird did not appear to respond to either the playback of its own voice or the Chappuis recording. It sang again just before dawn on 11 February, when another brief recording was made and, on playback, JL observed a nightjar swoop low overhead. No further singing was heard. The position of the bird whilst it was singing could not be determined.

The song consisted of short yelps, descending in pitch, *killop* or *ki-op*, described as *kliou* by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998). The sonogram of a single note is shown in Fig. 1. Notes were regularly spaced in series' of 5–10 notes. One series of ten notes was delivered at a rate of one per 2.2 seconds (three notes are shown in Fig. 2). A sonogram of a recording by Chappuis (2000) is presented in Fig. 3 for comparison. All sonograms were produced with Raven Lite 1.0 software (Cornell Lab of Ornithology). We only noted this individual sing on a total of five occasions during the two evenings and two mornings that we were present at the site.

Discussion

The note was similar to the recording by Chappuis (2000), but the call rate was noticeably slower. A

rate of one per second was noted by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998), with a higher rate when agitated. The individual we encountered was unresponsive to playback, unlike those reported by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998) and Chappuis (2000).

Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1998) find the call very peculiar—rather reminiscent of an *Epomops* bat and quite unlike that of any of the churring or whistling species of nightjars. They also highlight the morphological distinctness of the species, which could justify its removal to a monotypic genus (*Veles* being available), a step taken by Cleere (2001) and also followed here. However, it is unclear in which category Bates's Nightjar *C. batesi*, Freckled Nightjar *C. tristigma* and Nubian Nightjar *C. nubicus* would fall under such an arrangement, none of which has churring or whistling songs. Chappuis (2000) also subdivides the African nightjars into two groups: those with whistling phrases or clearly separated notes, and those with trills. Under this arrangement, the first category encompasses such varied songs as those of Freckled and Mountain Nightjars *C. poliocephalus*, and therefore seems less useful. Fry (1988) groups Freckled and Nubian Nightjars largely on the basis of voice but does not treat Bates's and Brown Nightjar as their voices were then undescribed. However, he refers to the voice of what may have been Bates's Nightjar described by Chapin, likening it to the Freckled Nightjar group, and this similarity has been noted by others since (Borrow & Demey 2001, Stevenson & Fanshawe 2002). We consider that Brown Nightjar also has greatest vocal affinities with this group, having neither a whistling nor a churring song, but one that can be described as a yelp or bark.

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